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ABSTRACT

In contrast to previous research, this study assumes a range of aspirations for individuals, rather than a single level. The basic hypothesis is that social class is related to the width of the range; that is, the lower the social class level the wider the range of aspiration. Interviews were conducted with parents of 255 Negro kindergarten and pre-school children, representing both lower class and middle class backgrounds. The criterion for selection as lower class was that neither parent had gone beyond high school in his education; for middle class, that both parents had finished high school and at least one parent had gone beyond high school. The hypothesis was supported for both educational and occupational aspirations, using a variety of operational measures. To the extent that lower class parents have a wider range of aspirations, with a peak as high as the middle class peak, there is a built-in potential for mobility. To encourage mobility it is important to provide opportunities and to establish a conviction of their attainability. This document is an expanded version of ED 030 482. (Author/NH)

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SOCIAL CLASS AND PARENTS' ASPIRATIONS

FOR THEIR CHILDREN

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Social Class and Parents' Aspirations for Their Children^{*}

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This is a study of educational and occupational aspirations as they are related to social class. A basic assumption underlying the research is that individuals have a "range of aspirations" rather than a single "level of aspiration." Approaching the study of aspirations from this perspective opens up new interpretations of research that has already been done, and suggests important new ways of collecting data.

Previous research in this area has focused almost exclusively upon a single level of aspiration. Respondents are asked a question which requires a single response, e.g., "How far do you hope to go in your schooling?" The data resulting from such questions indicate that lower-class individuals have a lower level of aspiration than middle-class individuals.

However, another interpretation of these findings is possible. Lower-class individuals may have a wider range of aspirations than middle-class individuals--the lower-class peak may generally be as high as the middle-class peak, but the lower-class base may be lower. If this is so then by chance alone it would appear that lower-class individuals have a lower level of aspiration than middle-class individuals, because they must select their single response from within a range that stretches lower than the middle-class range.

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Our research questions were formulated to determine the extent to which parents in different social classes do have a range of aspirations for their children as opposed to aspiring to only one level of education or occupation. The basic hypothesis is that social class is related to the width of the range-that is, the lower the social class level the wider the range of aspirations.

A major problem within the lower classes is the difficulty, due to poor resources, of being able to achieve in accordance with the dominant, middle-class values of society. What happens as a result of this problem? The members of the lower class could retain the middle-class values (or aspirations) without change, even though they are often not able to live up to them; they could abandon the middle-class values as inappropriate to their life situation, and develop an alternative and completely different set of values; or they could react pragmatically, shedding their values in a particular area. Yet another alternative--and the one which gives rise to the basic hypothesis being investigated--is that one response of the lower class is to "stretch" the societal values, such that they have a greater range of values. Thus, the middle-class values are retained and "stretched" downward so that lesser degrees of achievement and alternate forms of behavior will be valued. In the area of aspirations, a lower-class person would therefore be expected to aspire to a wider range of occupational and educational levels than a middle-class person.

The first formulation of the lower-class value stretch hypothesis was discussed in "The Lower-Class Value Stretch" (Rodman, 1963) along with its relevance to data on illegitimacy in the Caribbean, and data

on the level of aspiration. Support for the hypothesis in the area of illegitimacy in the Caribbean was presented in "Illegitimacy in the Caribbean Social Structure: A Reconsideration" (Rodman, 1966). Data on 176 respondents from Trinidad indicate that many members of the lower class do "stretch" their values so that both marriage and the non-legal marital union are part of their normative system. Moreover, the study documented the inverse relationship between social class status and the normative and simultaneous acceptance of both legal marriage and the non-legal union.

Previous Research Studies

The concept of the "level of aspiration" has been used in several types of studies. The nature of this concept, and its uses has been discussed more thoroughly in Rodman, Voydanoff, and Lovejoy (1969). In the present paper we shall limit our discussion to the use of the level of aspiration concept in studies of parents' aspirations for their children. As in the psychological experiments and sociological research on the subject's or respondent's level of aspiration, research on parents' aspirations for their children is limited to an underlying (but unstated) assumption that an individual has a single level of aspiration. In a few studies investigators have used measures of level of aspiration which could yield range information. However, in none of these studies have the investigators used the data in this manner.

Studies of parents' aspirations for their children show consistently that both level of aspiration and level of expectation are related to the social class of the parent. Level of aspiration was found to be related

to social class for mothers of children 3-6 months old (Boek, Sussman, and Yankauer, 1958), for mothers of children in nursery school, kindergarten and elementary school (Bell, 1965), for mothers of children in high school (Kandel and Lesser, 1969), and for parents with children of all ages (Smith, et al., 1967). Level of expectation was related to social class for mothers of children under one year old (Westoff, et al., 1961), for mothers of first grade children (Stendler, 1951), and for mothers of 8-14 year old boys (Rosen, 1959).

In Rodman, Voydanoff, and Lovejoy (1969) it was reported that, for adolescents, the level of expectation is more strongly related to social class than the level of aspiration. In none of the studies mentioned above were both the level of aspiration and the level of expectation ascertained for members of the same sample so that it is not possible to compare the strength of the relationships between class and level of aspiration and level of expectation. This is probably due partly to the fact that several of these authors have made no distinction between level of aspiration and level of expectation questions. The terms level of aspiration and level of expectation have been used interchangeably for both types of measures. Jaffe and Adams (1964), although they do not use the aspiration-expectation terms, nevertheless report relevant Gallup poll data. Their data show a very slight relationship between family income and the percentage of parents who would like their children to go to college (aspiration). Over 90% of the parents in each income group indicated that they would like their children to attend college. However, family income is strongly related to whether these parents think their children will go to college (expectation).

A few studies of parents' aspirations for their children have used measures which approach the idea of a range of aspirations as used in this paper. For example, Crandall, Dewey, Katkovsky, and Preston (1964) and Katkovsky, Preston, and Crandall (1964a, 1964b) have used measures based on Rotter's concept of minimal goal which is defined as "the lowest goal in a continuum of potential reinforcements for some life situation or situations which will be perceived as a satisfaction" (Rotter, 1954, p. 213). Rosen (1959), in his study of mothers of 8-14 year old boys, used a measure of occupational aspirations in which the mothers were asked if they would be satisfied or dissatisfied if their sons entered each of 10 different occupations. The mothers who were satisfied with a larger number of occupations were said to have lower aspiration levels; this is because, in order to be satisfied with more levels, they had to be satisfied with some occupations of lower prestige. However, since the total number of choices is not necessarily related to the prestige level of the occupations selected, Rosen computed two additional measures in which the occupations selected were weighted by their prestige levels. The scores on these measures were also considered as measures of level of aspiration. For all three measures, mean scores were computed for each ethnic group and for each social class. The social class level of the mothers was related to the mean scores for all three measures of aspiration, although ethnicity was more strongly related than social class. Rosen collected data appropriate for measuring the range of aspirations but he did not make use of this aspect of the data in his analysis. However, Rosen qualified his interpretation of the results by saying that "As the question was worded in this study, in one sense it is misleading to speak of the 'height' of vocational

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aspirations. For all groups have 'high' aspirations in that most mothers are content to have their sons achieve a high status. The basic difference between groups is in the 'floor,' so to speak, which they place on their aspiration" (Rosen, 1959, p. 60). A similar, but more limited, measure of occupational aspiration was used by Cohen (1965). In order to ascertain the degree of satisfaction with working-class occupations for a sample of working-class parents, the parents were asked to sort out 14 occupations according to whether they would be (1) happy or neither happy nor unhappy, or (2) unhappy to see their son in these occupations when they were 40 years old. The number of working-class occupations that the parents said that they would be happy or neither happy nor unhappy with was used as an indicator of mobility aspirations. "The fewer working class jobs the parents find acceptable for any offspring the higher is his probability of having a mobile son" (Cohen, 1965, p. 420). Shannon et al., (1966), in their study of migrant workers, asked parents how they would feel if their children finished each of several levels of education. However, only the lowest level with which they would be satisfied was used in his analyses.

These studies show that social class is an important variable in the area of parents' aspirations for their children. Some of them also seem to demonstrate an awareness of a range of aspirations, but none have developed the concept or used it in their analysis. The basic hypothesis tested in our study deals with the relationship between social class and range of aspirations. Several measures of range of aspirations will be presented and compared. Future papers will discuss other variables discussed in the literature which are of theoretical and practical

importance such as sex of the child, sex of the parent, family structure, family size, and the relationship between parents' aspirations and the more general concept of parental influence in the areas of educational and occupational attainment.

Methodology

In the fall of 1966 parents of 255 Negro kindergarten and preschool children were interviewed as part of the Head Start Evaluation and Research Program in Detroit, Michigan. The children were selected to participate in one of several research projects and the parents of all the children were then interviewed regarding a variety of subjects including their aspirations and expectations for their children in the areas of education, occupation, and income. Three samples of children were selected. In all three samples the following criterion was used to select children according to their social class background: In order for a child to be chosen as lower class it was necessary that neither parent had gone beyond high school in his education. For children selected as middle class both parents must have finished high school and at least one parent must have gone beyond high school.

The first sample of 115 children was selected from five inner-city kindergarten classrooms which had been suggested by the Detroit Board of Education as having teachers receptive to research in their classrooms. Only lower-class children were selected for this sample. The education of the parents was ascertained by going through the school records. For the second sample, 40 - 2 1/2-year-old children, lower-class and middle-class, were selected from returns to letters sent to parents whose names

had appeared in the newspaper birth listings two years previously. A third sample of 100 lower-class and middle-class 3 1/2 and 4 1/2-year-old children was selected from five Head Start classes and seven private nursery schools.

Interviews were conducted with 436 parents of the 255 children. Of these, 239 are mothers, 174 are fathers, and 23 are other relatives including grandparents and stepparents. All respondents except 14 fathers lived in the household with the child. The social class of the parents according to the Hollingshead Two Factor Index of Social Position (Hollingshead, 1957), which was used in our analysis, is distributed as follows:

Class I	14
Class II	34
Class III	41
Class IV	159
Class V	188
	436

Results

The first measure of the range of aspirations of parents for their children's education is based on the following question: "How I'd like to know how happy or unhappy you would be in each of the following situations. How would you feel if (your child) stops school after finishing the 6th grade?" A card was shown with the following categories: 1--very happy; 2--a little happy; 3--neither happy nor unhappy; 4--a little unhappy; 5--very unhappy. The question was repeated for each of the following educational levels: 9th grade, 12th grade, 2 years of college, 4 years of college, and more than 4 years of college.¹

Two criteria were used in order to develop our categories for the Range of Educational Aspirations (Happy). One criterion was the highest educational level at which the respondent would be happy--that is, the

highest level at which the respondent replied "very happy" or "a little happy". The second criterion was the range and pattern of educational levels with which the respondent would be happy. The educational levels have been combined into the following groups:

- I) four years of college or more
- II) two years of college
- III) high school
- IV) 9th grade or less

The categories for the Range of Educational Aspirations (Happy), based on the happiness and range pattern criteria, are as follows:

- High level-very narrow range (happy with group I only)
- High level-narrow range (happy with both groups I and II)
- High level-wide range (happy with group I and group III and/or IV)

- Medium level-narrow range (happy with group II and/or III)
- Medium level-wide range (happy with groups II and IV, III and IV, or II, III, IV)

- Low level-narrow range (happy with group IV only)

Thus, in order for a parent to be in the high level-wide range category, he must say he would be happy if his child stopped school after finishing "four years of college or more" and the range with which he reports he would be happy must include "high school" or "9th grade or less". To be in the high level-very narrow range category, a parent must say that he would be happy only if his child finished "four years of college or more".

Table 1 shows the parents' Range of Educational Aspirations (Happy) by the Hollingshead class position for the head of the household.

Insert Table 1 about here

A clear relationship exists between social class and range of educational aspirations ($\Gamma = .49$). Seventy-nine percent of parents in

Classes 1 - 3 have a very narrow range of aspirations compared with 23 percent of those in Class 5. Half of those in Class 5 have a wide range compared with 8 percent of those in Classes 1 - 3. Thus, for this measure of educational aspirations the hypothesis is supported--the lower the social class level, the wider the range of aspirations. The lower-class peak is as high as the middle-class peak, but lower-class parents are happy with lower levels to a much greater extent than middle-class parents.²

The Range of Occupational Aspirations (Happy) was measured by a procedure similar to that used for the Range of Educational Aspirations (Happy). The parents were asked, "Now tell me how happy or unhappy you would be if (your child) has the following job when he is grown?" A list of 32 jobs was read and the respondent indicated how happy or unhappy he would be for each one. Several jobs applied to children of both sexes--sales clerk, for example. For some male jobs (bartender) a similar job (waitress) was substituted for female children, and the interviewer chose the job corresponding to the sex of the child for which the parent was answering. These jobs were then categorized according to skill level so that the range of skill levels that the respondent would be happy to have his child enter could be computed. The skill levels used are professional (9 jobs listed), managerial (4), clerical and sales (6), craftsman and operative (6), and service and laborer (7). These have been grouped as follows:

- I--professional and managerial
- II--clerical and sales
- III--craftsman and operative
- IV--service and laborer

The range categories for occupational aspiration (high level-very narrow, etc.) were computed in the same manner as the range categories for

educational aspirations.

Three criteria have been used to determine if a parent is happy with a particular skill level: 1) the parent must be happy with at least one job in the skill level to be considered happy with that skill level; 2) the parent must be happy with at least one-third of the jobs in the skill level; 3) the parent must be happy with at least one-half of the jobs in the skill level.

Table 2 shows the relationship between Range of Occupational Aspirations (Happy) and social class when criterion (3) is used. The pattern of relationship and the magnitude of the percentage differences are similar for the other two criteria.

Insert Table 2 about here

As with educational aspirations the social class status of the parent is related to the width of the range of occupational aspirations ($\Gamma = .31$). Almost all respondents were in the high level categories indicating that they would be happy to have their children enter the occupations in the highest skill level. Thus the lower-class peak is as high as the middle-class peak for this measure. Moreover, in contrast to the educational measure, all the occupational questions were asked of all respondents regardless of their answers to any other questions. As a result, the high occupational peaks for almost all respondents is less an artifact of our procedures than the high educational peaks.

Tables 1 and 2 show similar patterns of results for the educational and occupational aspiration measures. The width of the range of educational aspirations is moderately correlated with the width of the

range of occupational aspirations.

The previous discussion has been based upon a single criterion for determining whether a particular level is part of the range of aspirations--whether the parent would be happy if his child reached that specific educational or occupational level when he grew up. However, the literature discussed in Rodman, Voydanoff, and Lovejoy (1969), especially the work of Lewin et al., (1941) and Atkinson (1957), has referred to several important components of aspirations, including the probability of success and the incentive or motivation for success. If we deal only with a happiness criterion, it is possible for an individual to say that he would be happy with achievement levels that he does not think are possible to reach or that he is not motivated to strive for. Additional criteria were therefore used in this study along with the happiness criterion of aspiration.

The following question was asked to determine the parent's conception of the probability of his child actually being able to complete each of the levels of education: "What do you think the chances are of (your child) really finishing 9th grade?" This question was repeated for 12th grade, 2 years of college, 4 years of college, and more than 4 years of college. Respondents were asked to choose one of the following answers: almost sure, fairly sure, 50-50, not much chance, almost no chance.³ Table 3 shows the relationship between social class and the range of aspirations when the Range of Educational Aspirations (Happy-Probability 1) was operationally defined to include those

Insert Table 3 about here

educational levels (1) that the respondent was happy with and (2) that the respondent said there was at least a 50-50 chance that his child would complete.

Social class shows a marked inverse relationship, as hypothesized, to the width of the Range of Educational Aspirations (Happy-Probability I). The relationship between social class and range of educational aspirations is very similar for the two measures of educational aspiration (see Tables 1 and 3). For the second measure, when having at least a 50-50 chance to finish each level is included as an aspiration criterion, the percentages in the high level-narrow range category and the high level-wide range category are slightly lower and the percentage in the medium level-narrow range category is higher, especially in the Class 5 group. A cross-tabulation of the two measures shows that almost all respondents have the same score for both aspiration measures. The major exception is the 26 respondents who have a high level-wide range in Table 1 and a medium level-narrow range in Table 3. Almost all of the differences between the two measures are found in Classes 4 and 5.

A second happy-probability measure--Range of Educational Aspirations (Happy-Probability II) was computed in which the respondent 1) must be happy with the level and 2) be at least "fairly sure" that his child could complete the level. The relationship between social class and the range of aspirations based on this measure is shown in Table 4. The percentage of respondents in the high level-very narrow range category is strongly related to social class with 57% of those in Classes 1-3 in this category

Insert Table 4 about here

contrasted with 13% in Class 5. The percentages of respondents with high level-wide range and medium level-narrow range scores is larger among Class 5 respondents. On this measure 30% of the total sample aspire to no levels--the only levels they are happy with are higher than the levels they feel their child has a fairly good chance to finish.

A cross tabulation of the happiness measure (Table 1) and the Happy-Probability II measure (Table 4) by social class indicates several changes. The following are the most important--In Classes 1-3, 16 respondents who had a high level-very narrow range on the happiness measure aspired to no level on the combined measure; in Class 4, 23 respondents changed from high level-wide range to medium level-narrow range and 45 respondents who were high level-very narrow or narrow range on the happiness measure aspired to no level on the combined measure; in Class 5, 39 respondents changed from high level-wide range to medium level-narrow range and 51 who were high level-very narrow, narrow, or wide range on the happiness measure aspired to no level on the combined measure.

To summarize for the educational aspiration measures, when the chance criterion is "50-50" (Table 3) it does little to qualify the results of the happiness measure (Table 1). That is, almost all parents feel that their children have a 50-50 chance to reach the levels that they would be happy with. When the chance criterion is "fairly sure" that the child can reach a given level (Table 4), the happiness measure results (Table 1) are modified, although the relationship between social class and aspirations remains somewhat similar. In Table 4 (in contrast to Table 1) all of the percentage figures for each social class are reduced

in all of the "high level" categories, while the percentages are higher at the "medium level-narrow range" and the "aspire to no levels" categories. The movement to "medium level-narrow range" is especially marked for Classes 4 and 5, indicating a lesser belief in the probability of their children's success at reaching the high educational levels.

Two additional questions have been combined with the happiness criterion in order to introduce a motivational component into the measurement of educational aspirations. The first question used to generate a Range of Educational Aspiration (Happy-Cost), was the following: "Some people say that it's up to the family to bear the cost of their children's education. This might mean providing room, clothes, paying for tuition, and buying books. Others say it's up to the child to make his own way through school by earning money to pay for whatever it costs. In your opinion how should the cost be divided when the child is in the 9th grade (junior high)?" The same question was asked for 12th grade (high school), 2nd year of college, 4th year of college, and beyond 4 years of college. The respondent was shown a card with five categories--all family; mostly family, some child; half family, half child; some family, mostly child; and all child. In order to aspire to an educational level within the Range of Educational Aspirations (Happy-Cost), the respondent must 1) be happy with the level and 2) say that the family should pay at least half of the cost at that level.

Table 5 shows the relationship between social class and Range of Aspirations (Happy-Cost). As hypothesized, the lower the social class

Insert Table 5 about here

the wider the range of aspirations. This is especially pronounced for respondents in the high ^{level} categories. When the results from this measure are cross-tabulated with the happiness measure (Table 1), the major change is found among those who have a high level-narrow or high level-wide range in Table 1 and a medium level-narrow range in Table 5. This change occurred for 57 parents, with all but four of them in Classes 4 and 5. As a result, the percentage of respondents with a medium level-narrow range increases inversely with social class in Table 5. The percentage aspiring to no levels on Educational Aspirations (Happy-Cost) is 12% for the total sample, is not related to social class, and has been omitted from Table 5.

When the criterion for dividing cost is changed so that the parent must say that the family should pay most of the cost, the pattern of responses is similar to the first happy-cost measure except that a larger percentage--30%--aspire to no level. On this measure the percentage who aspire to no level does vary somewhat by social class (Class 1-3, 19%; Class 4, 30%; Class 5, 36%). Thus, there is a larger percentage of respondents in Classes 4 and 5 who state their willingness to pay half the cost but not most of the cost of their child's education at the educational levels they are happy with.

The second parental motivation question, which led to a Range of Aspirations (Happy-Sacrifice), reads as follows: "People have different ideas about how important it is to go to school. If you had to give up going to places like restaurants and movies; if you had to get along with less clothing and furniture; with an older car and an older house; if you had to do extra work, like taking an extra job... If you had to do things like that, how many things of that kind would you do in order to help

(your child) finish junior high school?" The question was repeated for finishing high school, two years more than high school, four years of college, and going to school after four years of college. The respondent was shown a card with the following categories: all of them, most of them, about half of them, some of them, and none of them.⁴

Table 6 shows the relationship between social class and Range of Aspirations (Happy-Sacrifice) when the sacrifice criterion is the parent's response of a willingness to give up at least "about half of them". Overall, social class is inversely related to the width of the range of aspirations, as predicted by our hypothesis. This is so for the data as a whole because of the pronounced relationship among those in the high level groups, for this measure too, we find and despite the opposite relationship among those in the medium level group. For this measure, too, in contrast to the happiness measure used in Table 1, we find a higher percentage of respondents in all classes with no levels to which they aspire and higher percentages in the medium level-narrow range category in the lower classes. Seventeen respondents who had a high level-narrow range and 36 respondents who had a high level-wide range on the happiness measure had a medium level-narrow range on this combined measure. Only 2 of these respondents were in Classes 1-3.

Insert Table 6 about here

When the sacrifice criterion is changed so that the parent must be willing to do "most of them" the results remain quite similar to those shown in Table 6.

The sacrifice criterion appears to be a more direct measure of the

motivation of the respondents than is the cost-division criterion since it is worded in such a way that a respondent must consider what he himself is willing to do to help his child rather than the more general idea of how cost should be divided in families. In spite of this difference the distributions of the results are quite similar. A cross-tabulation of the combined aspiration measures of Happy-Cost and Happy-Sacrifice by social class confirms the similarity of the patterns of results found in Tables 5 and 6. Most of the parents have the same score on both measures. However, the parents in classes 1-3 show a greater correspondence than those in the lower classes.

When the effects of adding a probability or motivational component to the happiness measure are examined, a consistent pattern emerges for classes 1-3 and classes 4 and 5. In classes 1-3 the only change that occurs for a significant number of cases is that of moving from high level-very narrow range to aspiring to no level, especially on the more restrictive measures. In these cases the probability or motivational component did not reach the highest educational levels which were the only ones these parents would be happy with. In classes 4 and 5 the probability and motivational components had a greater effect. Two main changes occurred from the happiness to the combined measures with significant frequency-from the three high level categories to aspiring to no level, especially on the more restrictive measures, and from high level-narrow and wide ranges to the medium level-narrow range category. In spite of the differential effects of the probability and motivational components in classes 1-3 and classes 4 and 5, social class remains related to the width of the range of aspirations. However, the percentage

of respondents in the medium level categories is inversely related to social class on the combined measures, showing the greater influence of the probability and motivational components in the lower classes.

Although both of these components lower the peak of the range of aspirations for some parents in the lower classes, a substantial majority of these parents remain in the high level categories on these combined measures except for the Range of Aspirations (Happy-Probability II) measure for which 30% of the respondents aspired to no levels.

Preliminary analysis of cross-tabulations of the less restrictive combined measures indicate that the probability and motivational components lower the peak of the range in the lower classes independently of each other. For both the Range of Aspirations (Happy-Cost I) and Range of Aspirations (Happy-Sacrifice) measures the percentage of agreement with the Range of Aspirations (Happy-Probability II) for the medium level categories is approximately 25% for Classes 4 and 5.

Discussion

Thus the basic hypothesis has been supported for both educational and occupational aspirations. Social class is inversely related to the width of the range of aspirations for all range measures used. This relationship holds when controls are introduced for sex of the child and sex of the parent, number of children in the family, birthplace of the respondent, employment status of the mother, age of the respondent, and preschool educational experience of the child. In some subgroups the strength of the relationship varies from that of the total sample but the relationship between social class and range of aspirations does not disappear in any subgroup. The results are also similar when the

respondent's education is the measure of social class.

This has been a study of Negro parents whose children were between the ages of 2 1/2 and 5. Since there have been no studies in which parents' aspirations have been related to the ages of their children or longitudinal studies of parents' aspirations, it is not possible to describe empirically the course of development of parents' aspirations for their children as they grow older. Duncan, Featherman, and Duncan (1968), Kahl (1953), and Jaffe and Adams (1964) have discussed the increasing influence of child traits and situational circumstances on parents' aspirations as their children approach the age at which decisions regarding educational and occupational plans must be made. Kahl (1953) mentioned in his study of working-class parents that he found that the high performance of the child in school led to development of higher parental aspirations as well as poor performance leading to lower aspirations. Parents' aspirations also influence children's performance in school.

There are a number of important implications for research that stem from our study. In the first place, it is clear that almost all of the research previously carried out is directed by a traditional perspective that focuses attention solely upon a level of aspiration. In the few cases where range data are collected the influence of the traditional perspective is still felt, and the measures that are used in analyzing the data are level rather than range measures. This traditional perspective upon the study of aspirations demonstrates, again and again, that social class is related to the level of aspiration. But this approach restricts the researcher's viewpoint and prevents the collection and analysis of the richer data on the range of aspirations.

Our research has only scratched the surface of this complex phenomenon, and we are still working on various operational definitions of an aspiration, and of a range of aspirations. But we have demonstrated that it is possible to work with the assumption of a range of aspirations. We have also demonstrated that questions can be formulated, and that data can be collected and analyzed on the range of aspirations. Finally, we have extended what is known about aspirations by demonstrating the inverse relationship between social class and the width of the range of aspirations.

The results of the present study have interesting practical implications which differ from implications of most research on level of aspirations. To the extent that lower-class parents have a wider range of aspirations, with a peak as high as the middle-class peak, there is a built-in potential for mobility. As improved opportunities become available, the possibility of upward mobility is greater than if lower-class parents have low levels of aspiration. To encourage mobility it would therefore be more important to provide opportunities and to establish a conviction of their attainability than to try to change values or to raise levels of aspiration. Given a wider range of aspirations within the lower class, we expect that increased commitment at higher levels within the range would follow the increased perception by parents of the availability of opportunities for their children.

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Footnotes

1. If a respondent answered "very happy" (category 1) for two educational levels in a row the interviewer did not ask the rest of the questions. It was assumed that if a person were "very happy" with two levels in a row, he would be happy with all remaining higher levels. There were 58 respondents who were "very happy" with high school and 2 years of college and were assumed to be happy with 4 years of college and more than 4 years of college. Seventy-six respondents were "very happy" with 2 years of college and 4 years of college and were assumed to be happy with more than 4 years of college.

2. This last result must be qualified somewhat because of the 58 respondents mentioned in footnote 1. These respondents, 71% of whom were in Class 5, were placed in the high level-wide range category rather than the medium level-narrow range or medium level-wide range categories on the basis of this assumption. The range category for the 76 respondents mentioned in footnote 1 was not affected by the assumption that they would be happy with more than 4 years of college since being happy with 4 years of college placed them in a high-level category.

3. If a respondent answered "almost no chance" for two levels in a row, the interviewer did not ask the rest of the questions and it was assumed that he would have answered "almost no chance" for all the higher levels. This procedure was followed for 4 respondents.

4. If a respondent answered "none of them" for two levels in a row, the interviewer did not ask the rest of the questions and it was assumed that he would have answered "none of them" for the remaining higher levels. This procedure was followed for 2 respondents.

Table 1

RANGE OF EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS (Happy) BY SOCIAL CLASS
(in percents)

	-----Social Class-----		
	1-3	4	5
High level-very narrow range	79	43	23
High level-narrow range	12	29	25
High level-wide range	8	28	52
Medium level-narrow range	<u>1 1</u>	<u> </u>	<u> *</u>
Total	100	100	100
Number of cases	84	151	183

*Less than 1/2 of 1%.

Note: Information was not ascertained for 4 respondents. The 14 respondents who were happy with no levels have been omitted.

Table 2

**RANGE OF OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS (Happy) BY SOCIAL CLASS
(in percents)**

	-----Social Class-----		
	1-3	4	5
High level-very narrow range	61	37	27
High level-narrow range	20	19	26
High level-wide range	19	43	47
Medium level-narrow range	—	<u>1</u>	—
Total	100	100	100
Number of cases	70	154	181

Note: The 31 respondents who were happy with no level according to this criterion were omitted.

Table 3

RANGE OF EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS (HAPPY-PROBABILITY 1) BY

SOCIAL CLASS
(in percents)

	-----Social Class-----		
	1-3	4	5
High level-very narrow range	79	43	23
High level-narrow range	12	28	21
High level-wide range	6	21	42
Medium level-narrow range	3	8	13
Medium level-wide range	—	—	1
Total	100	100	100
Number of cases	81	146	177

Note: Information was not ascertained for 8 respondents. Twenty-four respondents who aspired to no levels were omitted. These 24 respondents made up between 4% and 7% of the cases in the various social classes.

Table 4

RANGE OF EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS (HAPPY-PROBABILITY II) BY

SOCIAL CLASS
(in percents)

	-----Social Class-----		
	1-3	4	5
High level-very narrow range	57	25	13
High level-narrow range	9	11	9
High level-wide range	3	11	21
Medium level-narrow range	7	20	25
Medium level-wide range			1
Low level-narrow range			1
Aspire to no levels	<u>24</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>30</u>
Total	100	100	100
Number of cases	37	156	185

Information was not ascertained for 8 respondents.

Table 5

RANGE OF EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS (HAPPY-COST)

BY SOCIAL CLASS
(by percents).

	-----Social Class-----		
	1-3	4	5
High level-very narrow range	79	41	20
High level-narrow range	10	28	21
High level-wide range	5	18	34
Medium level-narrow range	6	13	23
Medium level-wide range	—	—	<u>2</u>
Total	100	100	100
Number of cases	78	141	158

Note: Information was not ascertained for 7 respondents. The 52 respondents who aspired to no levels have been omitted.

Table 6

RANGE OF EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS (HAPPY-SACRIFICE) BY SOCIAL CLASS
(in percents)

	-----Social Class-----		
	1-3	4	5
High level-very narrow range	83	43	19
High level-narrow range	10	21	19
High level-wide range	4	21	41
Medium level-narrow range	3	15	20
Medium level-wide range	—	—	<u>1</u>
Total	100	100	100
Number of cases	77	134	158

Note: Information was not ascertained for 11 respondents. Fifty-six respondents who aspired to no levels have been omitted from the table.